

Over four in 10 employers need help with implementing greater flexible working

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Eighty five per cent of employers think demand for flexible working is likely to increase, with demand coming from across the board, but over four in 10 would like more support to implement it, according to a workingmums.co.uk survey.

The results of the survey of around 200 employers are interesting in light of current policy discussions about flexible working which tend to focus on forcing employers to flex more by advertising jobs that are flexible from day one and enforcing employees' flexible working rights.

The survey shows that currently 37% of employers think all groups of employees want flexible working (<https://www.workingmums.co.uk/jobseekers/flexible-working/>). This compares to 35% who think demand is coming mainly from parents and 23% who say it is mainly coming from mums.

However, although 38% think there has been no change in the groups asking for flexible working in the last year, 31% say they are getting more dads asking, 20% are getting more older workers and 29% are getting more non-parents.

The survey also suggests employers see flexible working as a key way to address skills shortages. 56% of employers say they are having trouble finding people with the right skills, with sectors such as construction particularly affected. Of those who have struggled to recruit people in the last year, 80% had trouble finding people with the right skills, while half had problems recruiting a more diverse workforce.

To reach a wider candidate base, many employers are making clear in their job adverts that they support flexible working. 62% already mention that they are open to flexible working in their job adverts and 71% say they intend to do so in the future.

Flexible working is also a factor in recruiting a more diverse workforce. Nearly half - 48% of employers - have been actively trying to recruit more women in the last 12 months and 47% say they aim to actively recruit more women in the next 12 months. Employers are also looking at other sometimes overlooked pockets of the workforce, including older workers (<https://www.workingwise.co.uk>). 24% actively recruit older workers and 32% think they will need to actively recruit older workers in the future.

Other results of the survey show:

- Over a third of employers have turned to freelancers and contractors to fill skills gaps
- 18% of employers have a returner programme, but 32% are considering starting one
- 68% use social media to recruit, more than the number who use recruitment agencies, but slightly fewer than those who use jobs sites
- 57% use LinkedIn to search for jobs sites and recruitment agencies

Gillian Nissim, founder of workingmums.co.uk (<https://workingmums.co.uk>) said: "The survey throws up some interesting results. Particularly interesting is the number of employers who say they need more support

to deal with the demand for flexible working. This shows that there needs to be some carrot along with the stick of stronger enforcement of flexible working legislation and new rights for employees. The world of work is changing very fast and many employers have adapted on an ad hoc basis, which can build up problems for the future. They need help to take a step back and strategise for the future.

"The problem of skills shortages is also providing food for thought for employers and in part driving the targeting of previously overlooked groups. This is reflected, for instance, in the number of employers considering returner programmes. The success of returner programmes is due to employers discovering the rich talent pool that they offer. We hope this is in turn making employers more open to different approaches to thinking about the workplace and how to ensure everyone can thrive in it."

For more information, contact Mandy Garner on 07789 106435 or email mandy.garner@workingmums.co.uk